

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO TODD WEBSTER

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my thanks to my chief of staff of the last 5 years, Todd Webster. It is a bittersweet day for me because my office says farewell to someone who has been a trusted, loyal, reliable, energetic, patient, faithful leader of the Coons team for my first 5 years here in Washington. He is someone who has been warm and humorous, caring, and always ready with a funny story to tell. He is down to earth, someone who takes interest in whomever he is speaking to; who seems to know everyone here, and who is well liked and well respected. He is a true family man who helped plan a surprise birthday party for his father Peter who recently turned 75; whose delightful and beautiful wife Lisa last fall was named president and CEO of Physicians for Peace and who joins him in their commitment to public service; and whose wonderful children, his daughter Sydney, son Peter, and daughter Catherine have sustained and supported him in his service—his 5 years with me in the Senate and his years before that with other Senators. Even their dog Kili, an Irish doodle, has been a part of the extended Webster family that has helped engage and entertain and support my office these last 5 years.

When I first came to Washington, under the most unlikely circumstances in 2010, I was looking for someone who could help me navigate the culture and folkways of this building, and there was no one better suited for that than Todd Webster. He worked on the campaigns of Senators Harkin and Byrd, as the deputy communications director for the Gore-Lieberman campaign, and as the communications director for Senator PATTY MURRAY. After that he was the communications director for Senator Tom Daschle.

After those years of service in the Senate, he had gone off on his own to form the WebStrong Group, and he was the owner of Webster Strategies and a regular commentator on MSNBC.

So when I had the chance to first meet him in 2010, I was encouraged that he was willing to offer his significant skills and talent to the challenge of helping me shape my team and decide on my trajectory here in the Senate. So this 9-year Senate veteran, this graduate of Bowdoin College and possessor of a master's degree from the GW Graduate School of Political Management set off with me on a fascinating and at times challenging trip.

Todd is a great athlete. He is someone who is a dedicated golfer, "an honorable player," as was commented by JJ Singh, one of our great team mem-

bers in the office. You can tell a lot about a person by how they behave on the golf course, and Todd is a gentleman. He plays fast so as not to hold up others, but will go out of his way to look for your lost ball in the woods.

If Todd left the office a few minutes early on Fridays, he would announce that he was "going to investigate some greenspace." Although rare, his outings on golf courses, I know, were a source of encouragement and relief.

On the softball field he was also a great contributor. A member of my team commented that "he was a valuable member" of our team, known as the Small Wonders, after Delaware's nickname, "and was known for his ability to turn triples into doubles and sacrificing his body at first base to get much-needed outs."

"He was also instrumental," JJ wrote, "to the team's magical 2014 turnaround season and Cinderella run to the playoffs."

On the management side, Todd would constantly walk around the office unannounced, just to check in and see how folks were doing. Rather than making staff find him, he would proactively seek out staff. His door was always open, whether to chat about something work-related or to vent or to listen about something personal. He always had a funny story to tell and was willing to listen and offer meaningful advice.

When Tom sensed that the afternoon was dragging on and our subterranean executive suite was in need of a pick-me-up, he would go on what we call in Delaware a "WaWa run," picking up snacks and caffeinated beverages to keep everybody focused until the end of what are sometimes very long days.

I got one interesting comment from a constituent staffer who has worked for me and for several other Senators in her many long years at the Senate. She commented that on one visit to DC, Todd cared enough to make sure our whole constituent relations team had lunch in the Senate dining room. She was astonished that he took time out of his busy day to have lunch and get to know them and get to know what they do on behalf of the people of Delaware every day.

Todd also understood and connected with my commitment to my home State and enthusiastically made an annual trek to the Delaware State Fair and devoted himself to learning more about Delaware's all-important poultry business. I will say that in equal part I did my best to learn more about sports, going to Caps events, Wizards events, and on golf outings with Todd. He joined me in going to memorable visits of processing plants where thousands of chickens made the eye-opening transition from being broilers to being dinner. In addition, I want to thank him for his strong constitution and his dedication for advancing the agricultural interests of my home State, which even included trying scrapple on one occasion.

At a time when congressional budgets have constantly been under pressure and many in America believe our political system is dysfunctional, Capitol Hill depends on dedicated, loyal, optimistic, and positive public servants like Todd—not only for the kind of policy and political accomplishments that ultimately show up on a resume or a job description but even more for the qualities and characteristics that make this place function—an unquestioningly positive attitude, a management style that makes everyone from interns to seasoned professionals feel welcome and valued, a willingness to speak candidly about himself and the office, about our challenges and prospects, a keen perspective on the absurdity of the many aspects of the modern political process, and the relentless idealism that inspires those around him to keep believing and working hard. These are the hallmarks of Todd's time over the past 5 years.

In the 5 years I have had the joy of working with him. He has always been at my side, helping my office get up and running and teaching me the ways of this town and this institution. Walking around Capitol Hill with him was often like walking beside the "mayor of the Senate." Every few steps, every few minutes, someone would stop to say hello, to catch up, to reconnect or talk about what is next. Far too often, people leave the Hill, having forgotten long ago why they ever got into public service in the first place. Todd never has. Throughout his 9 years serving three different Senators, he has remained cheerful, optimistic, tireless, and committed.

His car is often the very first one in the Russell garage in the morning, and he often has been the last staffer to leave and go home at the end of a long workday. Whether it is his willingness to call a staff member after the passing of a family member or bounding into the office every morning with a smile, saying, "top of the morning to you, hello friends, hello Meg, hello T, hello Chels," my office will simply not be the same without him—without his cheer, without his loyalty, without his hard work, without his energy, and without his optimism about what we can still do together here in this greatest institution in the American constitutional order.

So with that, I would like to offer my thanks and best wishes to my departing chief of Staff, Todd Webster.

Thank you.

REMEMBERING U.S. CAPITOL POLICE OFFICER VERNON ALSTON, JR.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a fellow Delawarean, U.S. Capitol Police Officer Vernon Alston, who passed away unexpectedly last month at the much too young age of 44.

Officer Alston was a fixture in the House of Representatives, spending